

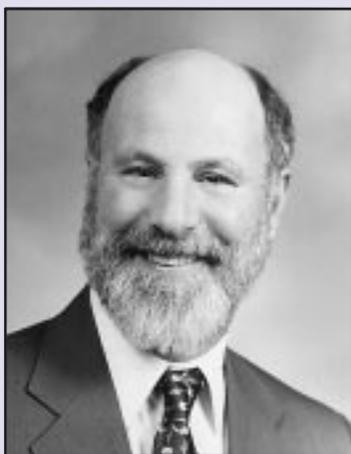
Senator Adam KLINE

37TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

406 John A. Cherberg Building • PO Box 40482
Olympia, WA 98504-0482



1998 END OF SESSION NEWSLETTER



Spring 1998

Dear Neighbor,

Well, the 1998 legislative session is finished and I'm proud of our team. We Democrats played great defense against powerful majorities in both the House and the Senate. And, with a few exceptions, we prevented major calamities. In a year in which partisan cheap shots

and power plays became the majority's standard procedure, we simply stood our ground and got our message out — the old-fashioned way of exposing special-interest politics.

This newsletter provides a brief report on some of the highlights of the session. As always, please call me or my legislative assistant, Syd Locke, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Adam Kline".

Adam Kline
State Senator
37th Legislative District

How To Reach Senator Kline

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Transportation Funding: “Make The Kids Pay For It.”

This year’s greatest disappointment was the Republicans’ transportation funding plan. To hear them brag, you’d think they’re going to fill the potholes and increase transportation funding, all with “no new taxes.” In reality, the plan takes money from the funds available for public schools and colleges, and from other needed programs, such as low-income housing, basic health coverage, and child care that’s affordable for WorkFirst trainees.

The source of the money in the Republican plan is the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (car tabs), which for more than 60 years has gone mostly to the General Fund to pay for schools and other non-transportation programs. Traditionally, most highway funding has come from the gas tax (now 23 cents a gallon). Instead of raising the gas tax, which has eroded in “buying power” by almost 50 percent due to years of inflation, the Republicans want to divert the MVET revenues to the Transportation Budget. This means less money for our kids’ education, for basic health care, for affordable child care, and for low-income housing.

Then, they want to borrow against this revenue by issuing bonds to the tune of \$1.9 billion — mega-borrowing for which we’ll pay out an estimated \$3 billion in interest alone, and more than that if the state’s bond rating is affected. This will plunge the state into a level of debt so deep that my 24-year-old daughter will be paying it off in higher taxes until she’s 49. All of this for only five years of road projects, which even the Republicans admit won’t help reduce gridlock in our area. And all this because they can’t deal with the notion that we who drive on our highways should pay as we go. Instead, we’ll make our kids pay, with cuts in their education now and higher taxes for years to come.

Education: Defending Public Schools

I’ve already mentioned the worst thing the Legislature did to public schools: the plan to divert MVET revenues from the General Fund to the Transportation Fund. But there were two other near misses: charter schools and “phonics” education. Meanwhile, the Republican-led Legislature did absolutely nothing to address the single biggest *real* problem in Washington education: class size.

Charter schools are touted as a way to allow greater experimentation with innovative ideas. There may be some degree of truth to that, but I won’t vote for anything like the proposals made these past two years. I’ll vote for a bill establishing charter schools only when it: 1) allows only *elected* school districts to grant charters; 2) explicitly requires charter schools to teach to the same academic standards the law (HB 1209) requires of all public schools; *and* 3) requires charter schools to follow the same funding formula as the local district, including a weighted formula.

We saw conservatives come out of right field with a plan to mandate that reading would be taught by a “phonics” method. That and the “whole language”

method are both legitimate teaching tools, and most teachers use them in some combination. But the state isn’t the Great School District in the Sky, and we have no business making that decision ourselves. Let’s let our teachers teach.

Meanwhile, there’s a *real* problem in our public schools, and the majority party refused once again to even consider it. Washington has the third largest (i.e., third worst) average class size in the U.S. There are 28.3 kids in the average K-12 classroom statewide, and more in Seattle. To get to the national average (25) we’d have to spend an additional \$450 million per year and hire more than 9,200 teachers. That would be a huge increase in school funding — 5 percent of our whole state budget — and politically difficult in light of the “spending cap” set by I-601.

At the very least, we could focus on early grades and hire enough teachers so kids would get greater attention while they’re learning to read. But a Democratic proposal to do that was defeated, while a Republican bill to spend \$11 million on phonics passed. Go figure.

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Farmworker Housing

We reached a milestone on the road to equal treatment of Washington's migrant workers, with the passage of a bill that sets a building code for temporary on-farm housing. The bill was a request by Gov. Locke, who takes a strong personal interest in this issue.

Currently, thousands of migrant families live in unsanitary, unsafe conditions: sleeping in their trucks or in the fields; whole families living under tarps; washing clothes in the ditches of agricultural run-off; their kids playing in pesticide-laden dirt. These are the conditions that inspired many of us to boycott non-union produce, and to do what we could to support la Huelga.

Gov. Locke's bill allows growers to build temporary housing according to a somewhat relaxed building code that meets federal OSHA standards, and that requires hot and cold running water, electricity, cooking areas, and indoor sleeping quarters.

This is a clear victory for the 37,000 migrant workers who pass through Washington during the growing and harvest seasons.

In addition, the bill provides \$1 million in new funds for permanent (non-farm) housing, built to the standard code, for farmworker families who are full-time Washington residents. Another \$1 million will come from the Housing Trust Fund, an existing fund that supports low-income housing throughout the state.

My only concern is with the funding: \$2 million is a start, but inadequate. The Housing Trust Fund is already poorly funded given the needs of low-income people for housing in Washington's urban and rural areas, especially right here in our district. However, I feel confident that with a new legislature in 1999, a willing Governor, and a two-year budget

to write, we will be able to provide funds both for farmworker housing and for additional low-income housing statewide.

Strengthening Our DUI Laws

As a former volunteer lobbyist for Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), and former chair of its local chapter, I've been involved for seven years now in the campaign to make our city streets and highways safer. High on my list of priorities were a bill reducing the legal blood-alcohol level from .10 percent to .08 percent, and a bill requiring that all DUI offenders (not just multiple offenders) lose their licenses. This year, *both* goals were realized. And I'm happy to say that the license suspension bill was my own. This was one of the few Democrat-sponsored bills to pass this Republican-controlled legislature. Gov. Locke, who also made this bill a priority, has already signed it into law.



At the same time, I feel it's counter-productive to force a DUI offender to lose his or her *job*, especially because alcoholism is often made worse by the stress of unemployment. For this reason, I sponsored a bill that would expand the use of occupational drivers' licenses, for those who need to drive to work. (That license specifies the route and times of day, so the offender can go only to and from work.) A House version of the bill, which expands eligibility for the license to include WorkFirst trainees and union apprentices, came within inches of passing, and I will introduce it again next year.

Rolling Back the Clock on Abortion Rights

This is one area where the Legislature came perilously close to going backward. Fortunately, reason and a respect for individual rights won out in the last days of the session.

A Senate-approved measure that would have required teenage couples to notify their parents if they intend to get an abortion died in the House. Meanwhile, a House bill that would have outlawed a rarely used abortion procedure failed when a majority of senators, including me, substituted language reflecting existing state law. (Washington law already prohibits late-term abortions unless the mother's life or health is endangered.)

By doing so, we recognized that the state has no business making medical decisions that are better left to a woman and her doctor.

As a former chair of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League's political action committee, I will continue to resist any attempt to let government make a woman's personal choices for her.

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The Attack on Affirmative Action

In the 1960s, Congress and most states passed laws against discrimination. In the 1970s, the federal government and many states, seeing that the economic effects of discrimination couldn't just be legislated away, established programs to bring women and under-represented minorities into the workplace and the economic mainstream. Based on the American tradition of inclusion, and a desire to break down the "old boys' network" by which jobs and contracts were awarded, affirmative action was seen as a temporary way to level the playing fields so long as it needs leveling.

The playing field still needs leveling, and I'm happy to take the lead in retaining affirmative action. I was a co-sponsor of the bill that would have placed an alternative to Initiative 200 on the November ballot. This past week, I was chosen to go one-on-one with John Carlson, a leading proponent of I-200, in a televised debate. I will continue to do my best for affirmative action.

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT STATE GOVERNMENT?

I'd love to discuss them with you. Please come to an Open House to be held Wednesday evening, May 21, at 7 p.m., at the Southeast Seattle Senior Center, 4655 S. Holly St. near Rainier Avenue.



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